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ABSTRACT

Discrepancies between actual and desirable organizational cultures, with a focus on the implications for improving administrator training, are examined in this report. The desirable characteristics of a productive school culture are determined and compared with the perceptions of Australian and U.S. staff. A mailed survey of 587 practitioners in Melbourne, Australia, and 1,700 practitioners in Chicago (Illinois) attempted to measure beliefs on scales of accomplishment, recognition, power, affiliation, strength of culture, job satisfaction, and commitment. A significant difference existed between the scores of the two samples of practitioners, although not between the scores of a sample of experts, which indicates cultural differences. Power was found to be a stronger attribute of the Australian school culture, and affiliation, accomplishment, and recognition were stronger attributes for American practitioners. An implication is that administrators should have a strong conceptual knowledge of organizational culture and their role in developing productive schools. Three tables and an appendix of statistical findings are included. (LMI)

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THE IMPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRINCIPAL PRACTICE AND PREPARATION PROGRAMS BASED ON A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN AUSTRALIA AND THE U.S.A.

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ABSTRACT

Recently considerable attention has been given to the area of organization culture. This study provides a measure of the organizational values and strength of the culture as perceived by two samples, one from U.S.A. and one from Australia. The purpose of the study was to examine systematically the organizational culture phenomenon and explore the implications and opportunities for the principal in terms of preparation and development.

The SPECTRUM instrument was used to measure underlying values and beliefs on the scales of Accomplishment, Recognition, Power, Affiliation, Strength of Culture, Job Satisfaction, and Commitment.

There was a significant difference in the scores of the two samples at the scale level which indicates difference in the two cultures.

After further analysis the paper provides a number of propositions with discussion of the implications and opportunities for the preparation and practice of educational administrators.

INTRODUCTION

The study of culture has the potential to richly enhance the understanding of schools as complex organizations. This research, endeavoring to further enhance understanding, sets out to measure the perceived organization culture values of employees in two school systems (Melbourne, Australia and Chicago, U.S.A.). Further, the same qualities of school culture were rated by a panel of educational experts in Australia and the United States to obtain an understanding of their perception of the desirable characteristics of a productive school culture. These findings were directed towards a discussion of implications for administrator preparation and inservice.

Culture

The study of culture is unclear as it pertains to its application by educational administrators to school situations. The concept of culture adopted in this paper is the anthropological view rather than that of "high culture." Culture is, for the purposes of this paper, a system of shared beliefs, shared meanings, and history, manifested clearly in the social interaction of ritual ceremony, imagery and symbol. In adopting this definition for operational purposes, writers offer two areas of caution. Firstly, it is yet to be demonstrated that a causal relationship exists between school culture and school effectiveness. Owens, however, (198, 1987) suggests there is sufficient evidence to suggest that effectiveness of student learning and development is significantly associated with the quality and characteristics of the organization culture

Beare (198, 1989) supports this relationship:

> "What seem to be emerging as a much more powerful factor about the acknowledged 'best' school is that they have a developed culture, milieu, environment, atmosphere, a cultus corporis, which in a myriad of ways influence how children learn."

The relationship between culture and effectiveness is clouded; however, further exploration is warranted particularly as it relates to the role of the principal as a key player in school/social interaction.

Secondly, a warning is warranted regarding the purported use of culture investigations. One view of culture is that it is what an organization is (Meek 463, 1988; Smircich 347, 1983; Weick 1979; Morgan 1980) a view that anthropologists would be in sympathy with maintaining that it is for description and understanding only.

A critique by Bates (1987, 85-87) provides sound reasons to limit the discussion to the first approach of description and understanding.

A second view is that culture is what an organization has (Meek 463, 1988) and therefore can be manipulated. This view has an optimistic following, hailing organizational culture as the new management tool (Dean & Kennedy 1952, Millikin 1984, Duignan 1985, Peters & Waterman 1982, Schwartz & Down 1982). Culture is however influenced, not created, by individuals and developed through a collection of social interactions of groups and communities. While not eschewing the manipulative approach it can be argued that if culture is a socially interactive phenomena then key persons can understand and influence it.

This doesn't suggest that once culture is understood it might be manipulated for the pleasure of the school principal or board. However, a knowledge of the dynamics of the school culture would assist the principal in understanding the processes which are utilized to develop curriculum, motivate staff and develop a productive school.

Methodology

The Study

The study was designed to determine the desirable characteristics of a Productive School Culture (PSC) and compare those with the actual perceptions of staff in two cultures. Similarities were observed. However, the thrust of this paper was to examine those areas where discrepancies occurred between the "actual" and the "desirable." Discussion focused on the implications of discrepancies for the training of administrators thus providing them with a better understanding of the school culture and skills to enable them to be effective in developing a productive school culture.

Table 1

DESIGN OF STUDY - ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

	USA SAMPLE	AUSTRALIAN SAMPLE
Practitioners' Perception of their school (Actual)		
Experts' Perception of a Productive School Climate (PSC) (Desirable)		

The Sample

Purposive samples were taken from a population of practitioners in Melbourne, Australia (587 respondents representing 18 schools) and Chicago U.S. A. (1700 respondents representing 81 schools). The practitioners were asked to complete the Spectrum instrument in terms of their perceptions of their school.

The Spectrum Instrument

The instrument used to collect the data was Spectrum (MetriTech Inc.), which had been developed over two decades of work focused on employee motivation. The instrument is based on the theory of Personal Investment which is described as:

> "people decide to invest their time, energy and talents in a number of different activities, depending upon the meaning and value they place on a particular activity...these personal incentives or **values** are determined by an individual's past experience as well as the **situation and context** (author's emphasis) in which the person lives and works." (Braskamp and Maehr 1985, 2-3).

These values are entitled Accomplishment, Recognition, Power, and Affiliation. The Spectrum instrument also focused on three influences on motivation; personal incentives, job opportunities, and organizational culture. The organizational culture dimension was chosen for the purposes of this study, as it is a key domain in which the educational administrator operates. The term culture in the Spectrum Instrument is used to refer to the underlying values and beliefs of the organization as perceived by employees.

The four key values as applied to the organizational culture were:

Accomplishment, whether employees perceive the organization as supporting their involvement and efforts through an emphasis on excellence in its products and services.

Recognition, the extent to which the employees perceive the organization as one that regularly and appropriately rewards achievement.

Power, the extent to which the employees describe the overall climate of the organization as competitive.

Affiliation, whether the employees would describe the overall climate of the organization as emphasizing cooperation and mutual support among employees.

Spectrum also provides a further measure of:

Strength of Culture scale measures the extent to which organizational values are perceived as being well defined and effectively communicated to the employees.

Two further scales are Commitment and Satisfaction. These were not included as a part of the study because they focus on the individual rather than the organization.

The Expert Panel

Practitioner scores created a perceptual picture of "what is" in the two sample areas, however, it was considered essential to also have a picture of "what should be" as it relates to a productive school culture. Two expert panels were asked to examine each item as to its importance in creating a productive

school culture. Each panel (20 or more members) consisted of professors of educational administration, practicing principals, individuals preparing to become principals, practicing teachers and officials of national professional educational associations or organizations.

Analysis

(a) Practitioner scores were subjected to ANOVA test of significance for the 60 individual items, the organizational culture scales (Accomplishment, Recognition, Power and Affiliation) and the additional scale of Strength of Culture.

(b) Expert scores were subjected to a one-way ANOVA to examine interaction between the Australian and U.S.A. experts on the organizational scales and also to examine the degrees to which the Australian and U.S.A. experts differed on the five scales.

(c) The items for each scale were listed in rank order based upon the scores of the practitioners and the rating by the expert panel. Items selected for discussion were chosen on the basis of degree of discrepancy between the practitioner and expert rank order. Items were considered to be more powerful the higher the rank order by the practitioners and the panel of experts. Substantial discrepancies pinpointed those areas where there was a difference between "what is" and "what should be" for the discussion regarding administrator training. Items

included as having a substantial discrepancy varied according to the number of items in the scale and level of ranking. (See Appendix 1, Criteria for Selection of Items)

Findings

The Practitioner Samples

The ANOVA revealed a high degree of significance in scores at the four value scale levels (See Table 1). Similar findings were recorded for the additional scale of Strength of Culture. In all cases except the power value the scores for the U.S.A. practitioners were higher than for the Australia practitioners. At the individual item level a (.01) level of significance was obtained for 51 of the 60 items and (.05) for three items.

For 52 of the items the means for the U.S.A. practitioners were higher than the means for the Australia practitioners, however, for the 8 items in which the Australian practitioners' means were higher, 5 were from the power scale.

Table 2

Means of Australian and U.S.A. Samples on Selected Culture Scales

(showing ST in brackets and level of significance)

Scale	AP(N=587)	UP(N=1700)	Level of Significance
Accomplishment	31.0579 (5.7154)	33.7824 (5.6982)	<.01
Recognition	26.4685 (6.5439)	29.4668 (6.8394)	<.01
Power	12.0681 (3.2198)	11.5032 (3.1529)	<.01
Application	29.2964 (6.5238)	31.2263 (6.7758)	<.01
Strength of Culture	22.7445 (4.7543)	25.6895 (4.6026)	<.01

Table 2 suggests that the School culture for the U.S.A. practitioners appears to differ from the Australian practitioners in two ways.

1. Power was a stronger attribute of school culture for the Australian practitioner.
2. Affiliation, accomplishment, and recognition were stronger attributes for the U.S.A. practitioner.

The differences in the perceived organizational values between the two cultures suggests that for administrator training there may be key differences which need to be taken into account.

The Expert Group

The ANOVA reveals no interaction between the Australian and U.S. experts on the organizational culture scales $F(6,107) = .079$ $p>.05$. Further, no main effect for Australian and U.S. experts was noted in that they did not differ on scores for the organizational culture scales $F(1,107) = 2.428$ $p>.05$. It was noted in the use of the Tukey (HSD) procedure that a significant difference was recorded between the Organizational Culture Scale Recognition (low) and all other scales ($p<.05$).

The findings indicate that experts in the two countries do not vary significantly in their view of what makes a productive school climate. This contrasts with the view of the practitioner in the two countries.

The Practitioner and Expert Comparison

The scores for the panel of experts and the practitioner scores were placed in rank order. Analysis on all items was not possible for this paper. Only those items with a discrepancy between the rank order for the panel of experts and the practitioners were considered for discussion (see Table 2). The rank order for all items are in Appendix 2, Rankings by Nationality and Position).

Table 3

DISCREPANCIES OF RANKINGS BY NATIONALITY AND POSITION

Value Scales

(N=Number of items in Spectrum Scale)

ACCOMPLISHMENT: (N=9)

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
53. The administrator of this school expects us to be productive in our work.	1	4		
55. I'm encouraged to make suggestions about how I can be more effective.			5	1

POWER: (N=5)

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
2. Disagreements occur here because people frequently compete with each other.	4	2	4	2
12. People spend a lot of time trying to get to know those in powerful positions in this school.	1	3		

AFFILIATION: (N=9)

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
14. In this school there is respect for each individual.	4	1		
20. Communication within this school is very informal and frequent			3	6
22. People at all levels of this school share information about how well it is doing.			6	1
25. I'm involved in decisions that directly affects my future.			7	2
46. We're treated as adults in this school.			1	6

RECOGNITION: (N=9)

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
7. Employees here receive a lot of attention.	5	1	7	1
31. Evaluations of my work are directly tied to how well I do.	4	9	2	6

Other Scale

STRENGTH OF CULTURE: (N=7)

Item Number		AP	AE	UP	UE
5.	In this school we believe in what we are doing.	4	1		
18.	Everyone in this school know what it stands for.			5	2
39.	I know what this school stresses.	1	3	2	4
44.	I know what really counts around here.	2	5		

Discussion

While the data in Table 1 suggest differences in the strength of each scale between the two samples, the data in Table 2 suggest that items also exhibit common elements. There were ten items meeting the criteria for the U.S.A. sample and nine items for the Australia sample with four of the items common to both samples.

The Australian Sample - Analysis

Scale I Accomplishment

Item 53 indicates staffs' strong perception of administrators expectations to be productive, however, this quality is not seen by the experts to be relatively important for a PSC.

The discrepancy in Item 53 suggests that staff understand the expectations to be productive however the appropriateness of their expectation is not evident in this scale.

Scale II Power

Item 12 suggests that staff indulge in a higher level of political activity that is higher than that required for a PSC as perceived by the panel of experts. Item 2 suggests a PSC that is characterized by disagreement occurring through competition. Both may indicate a lack of clear expectations in organizational process regarding "how to get along" in the organization and in the case of Item 2, the ability to resolve conflict.

Scale III Affiliation

Item 14 ranking suggests that only an average level of respect exists for each individual. Expert rankings suggest that respect is essential for a PSC.

Scale IV Recognition

The ranking for Item 31 indicates that practitioners observed a link with evaluation and job future, whereas the experts did not regard this as an important dimension for a PSC which may suggest that staff need greater awareness of evaluation goals. The ranking for Item 7 indicated that the experts considered receiving a lot of attention as important for a PSC but the practitioners indicated attention was not received to any great extent by staff.

Scale V Strength of Culture

The rankings for Items 39/44 indicate a discrepancy between the desirable and the actual. Staff perceived strength of culture to be higher than the experts indicated was desirable for

a PSC. In the case of Item 5, experts ranked as "number 1" the most important while the staff perceptions were only average.

The U.S.A. Sample - Analysis

Scale 1 Accomplishment

Items 55 indicates a discrepancy which suggests staff do not feel encouraged to make suggestions on how to be effective.

This perceived lack of encouragement prevents them from making suggestions or acting in other than traditional ways.

Scale II Power

Item 2 suggests a PSC that is characterized by disagreement resulting from competition. This may indicate a lack of clear knowledge or understanding of organizational processes regarding the ability to resolve conflict.

Scale III Affiliation

Items 25/22 indicate that career decisions and information are not shared with relevant staff yet both were seen as highly desirable for a PSC by the experts. Item 46 indicated staff treat each other as adults, however, this was not seen by experts as an important quality for a PSC. Likewise Item 20 indicated that communication was relatively informal and frequent, but experts did not see this as a high priority for a PSC.

Scale IV Recognition

Item 31 indicates that practitioners observed a link with evaluation and job future, whereas it was regarded of only low importance for a PSC by experts. This suggests that staff need greater awareness of evaluation purposes. Item 7 indicated that "receiving a lot of attention" is important for a PSC but was not being received by staff.

Scale V Strength of Culture

Item 39 indicated a discrepancy between the desirable and the actual. Staff perceive strength of culture to be higher than what the experts considered important for a PSC. Item 18 "knowing what the school stands for" was regarded as important for a PSC but was not perceived by staff to be present.

Speculative Themes

Feedback, Assessment and Evaluation

In both samples items "Employees here receive a lot of attention" and "Evaluations of my work are directly tied to how well I do" were similar in discrepancy. This highlights the need for a culture that values employees receiving attention and with clear evaluative guidelines which were not evidenced by the practitioners.

The item "I'm encouraged to make suggestions about how I can be more effective" (U.S.A.) illustrates the lack of feedback to the administration and management by staff endeavoring to develop a more productive school.

Conflict and Politicalization

Each of the expert panels indicated that a PSC should demonstrate values of competition and conflict, however, practitioners believed it was of average occurrence. If professional competition is to be regarded as normal then skills and processes are required to handle the ensuing conflict productively.

In the Australian sample "People spend a lot of time trying to get to know those in powerful positions in this school" it suggests that the schools were more politicized, however, experts felt it was of less importance. This discrepancy may indicate lack of guidelines for promotion and clearly defined norms for "getting around the school," hence the political style may be favored. Staff in both samples demonstrated a clear understanding of what the school stresses, however, this is seen as being more important by the experts regarding PSC. It does emphasize the need for a greater understanding of the school as a political organization.

Monitoring Employees

Respect, "In this school there is respect for each individual," (Aust), sharing information, " People at all levels of this school share information about how well it is doing," (USA), and discussions involving the individual regarding their future (USA) were all rated low in the practitioner's perception. However, "We're treated as adults in this school" (USA) was seen as a positive attribute by the practitioners but relatively low by the expert panel. Positive personal relations may improve morale but also assist in enhancing productivity. These items may indicate that affiliative relations may not be the predominate style of interaction but competitive and/or political. Further, the data may indicate that an adult interaction mode is present but a lacks content and guidelines for behavior.

Knowledge of Culture

Practitioners in both samples regarded "I know what this school stresses," and the Australian sample "I know what really counts around here," as of higher importance than the expert panel. In items "In this school we believe in what we are doing," (Aust)
and "Everyone in this school knows what it stands for," (USA) the experts rated items higher than the practitioners. Discrepancies indicated that there is a lack of direction from the mission statement and perhaps a lack of communication of that mission. The known culture does not align with that of the PSC.

Tentative Proposals

It has been demonstrated subjectively that the differences between the two samples in content are apparently minimal. Significant differences between the practitioner samples do exist, but not between experts. When overall thematic issues are raised, the differences between the two countries are less pronounced. Proposals developed are designed for both samples, however, where emphasis is considered appropriate it is indicated.

Without prejudice to existing training programs the following are proposals for inclusion or emphasis in administrator preparation and inservice programs.

General

An overarching proposal is that administrators should have a strong conceptual knowledge of culture and the importance of

their role in understanding, influence, and development of productive schools.

Specific

1. A conceptual understanding of conflict and its uses within skill development in leading to resolution.
2. An understanding of schools as complex organizations and in particular the political domain.
3. An understanding and skill in working with staff within various styles, e.g., competitive, affiliative, political. (Australia)
4. Techniques for developing professional respect through, for example, collegiality, shared decision making.
5. Development of mission statements and their effective communication to staff for inclusion in "on the job" activities.
6. Develop knowledge, skills and processes for staff evaluation, assessment, feedback and recognition.

Conclusion

The theme of the paper has been to examine differences between the "ideal" school culture and "what is" in the two samples. Proposals for inclusion and emphasis in the training of administrators have been listed to further extend their knowledge and capacities for developing a PSC, not to support manipulation of the school, its culture and staff.

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APPENDIX 1

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF ITEMS

Items included for discussion were based on the following:

1. at least one ranking for practitioners or panel of experts were higher than the mid point of ranked items.

2. for items to be included the discrepancy had to be 3 or more for scales with 9 items, and 2 or more for scales with 5 or 7 items.

APPENDIX 2

RANKINGS BY NATIONALITY AND POSITION

Value Scales

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
23. The school stresses excellence.	6	6	4	2
26. Employees here are afraid to make a mistake.	9	9	9	9
27. There is peer pressure here to do a good job.	7	7	8	8
29. Around here we're encouraged to try new things.	5	3	3	5
40. In this school, we're encouraged to try new things.	3	2	2	2
47. Every person in this school can invent, create and solve.	8	8	7	7
53. The administrator of this school expects us to be productive in our work.	1	4	1	2
55. I'm encouraged to make suggestions about how I can be more effective.	2	1	5	1
60. If someone has a good idea or project, the administrator listens and supports it.	4	5	6	5

POWER

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
2. Disagreements occur here because people frequently compete with each other.	4	2	4	2
12. People spend a lot of time trying to get to know those in powerful positions in this school.	1	3	2	3
37. Competition among teachers/departments is actively encouraged in this school.	3	4	3	3
48. The school administration regards conflict among competing work groups and individuals as healthy.	2	1	1	1
58. The emphasis here is on letting us compete and see who ends up the winner.	5	5	5	5

AFFILIATION

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
4. I do my best work here because co-workers urge me to do so.	8	8	8	8
14. In this school there is respect for each individual.	4	1	2	3
20. Communication within this school is very informal and frequent.	5	7	3	6
22. People at all levels of this school share information about how well it is doing.	7	5	6	1
25. I'm involved in discussion that directly affects my future.	2	4	7	2
32. There's a close-knit feeling among us in this school.	3	2	5	4
34. Employees here don't really trust each other.	9	9	9	9
38. This school really cares about me as a person.	6	6	4	3
46. We're treated as adults in this school.	1	3	1	6

RECOGNITION

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
1. Employees here receive a lot of attention.	5	1	7	1
8. This school makes me feel like a winner.	7	4	5	3
19. In this school we hear more about what people do right than the mistakes they make.	3	5	4	5
28. This school makes me feel like I'm an important productive person.	2	3	3	3
31. Evaluations of my work are directly tied to how well I do.	4	9	2	6
36. This school allows me to do things that I find personally satisfying.	1	2	1	2
45. People here are always getting awards and extra attention by doing good work.	8	8	9	7
50. I regularly receive information about quality of my work.	9	7	6	8
51. There are many incentives here to work hard.	6	6	8	8

Other Scale

STRENGTH OF CULTURE

Item Number	AP	AE	UP	UE
5. In this school we believe in what we are doing.	4	1	1	1
18. Everyone in this school knows what it stands for.	6	4	5	2
30. This school is clear about what it expects from me.	3	2	4	6
35. Almost everyone has similar values and ideas about what this school should be doing.	7	7	7	7
39. I know what this school stresses.	1	3	2	4
44. I know what really counts around here.	2	5	3	2
59. Everyone employed at this school knows what we value the most.	5	6	6	5

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